

What is claimed is:

1. A safety device for a propane tank, the tank including a gas valve and a collar, the device comprising:

a) a cup, the cup having a size sufficient to enclose a substantial portion of the valve, and

b) means for locking the cup in place over the valve, wherein the locking means, in a locked position, prevents access to the valve.

2. The safety device of Claim 1, wherein the locking means includes a cross-member and a handle portion.

3. The safety device of Claim 2, wherein the cross-member and handle portion are distinct, and wherein the handle portion is insertable into an opening formed in the cross-member.

4. The safety device of Claim 3, wherein both the cross-member and handle portion include means for engaging the collar.

5. The safety device of Claim 4, wherein the cross-member includes a pair of spaced-apart baffles, the baffles having mutually-aligned holes, wherein the holes are spaced sufficiently away from a main body of the cross-member to enable a part of the handle to rest below a level of the holes.

6. The safety device of Claim 5, further comprising a padlock having a shank, the shank being insertable through the holes of the baffles.

7. The safety device of Claim 2, wherein the handle portion is permanently affixed to the cross-member.

8. The safety device of Claim 7, wherein the cross-member is affixed to the cup.

9. The safety device of Claim 8, wherein the cross-member has two ends, and wherein the cross-member includes means, at both of said two

ends, for engaging the cross-member with the collar of the tank.

10. The safety device of Claim 9, wherein one of the engaging means comprises a generally C-shaped member.

11. The safety device of Claim 9, wherein one of the engaging means comprises a pair of generally spaced-apart parallel members, the parallel members being sized to fit around a portion of the collar, the parallel members including mutually aligned holes for accommodating a shank of a lock.

12. The safety device of Claim 2, wherein the cross-member and handle portion comprise a unitary structure.

13. The safety device of Claim 12, wherein the cross-member includes means for engaging the collar at diametrically opposed locations.

14. The safety device of Claim 13, wherein one of the engaging means includes an L-shaped structure having a hole which accommodates a shank of a padlock.

15. The safety device of Claim 13, wherein the cup is affixed to the cross-member.

16. The safety device of Claim 1, wherein the locking means includes a U-shaped member insertable through at least one opening formed in the cup, and means for locking the U-shaped member in position after the U-shaped member has been inserted through the cup.

17. The safety device of Claim 16, wherein the U-shaped member has two prongs, wherein a first of said prongs is longer than a second of said prongs, wherein said first prong is sufficiently long to extend beyond the collar when said first prong is inserted through the cup, wherein said first prong includes a hole which accommodates a shank of a padlock.

18. The safety device of Claim 17, wherein said second prong has a hole, and wherein the hole of said second prong is spaced-apart from an end

of said second prong.

19. A method of securing a propane tank, the tank having a valve, the method comprising the steps of:

- a) covering the valve with a cup-shaped member, and
- b) locking the cup in place so that the cup cannot be readily dislodged from the valve, and so that access to the valve is blocked.

20. The method of Claim 19, wherein the cup-shaped member is attached to a cross-member, and wherein the covering step comprises positioning the cross-member over the valve, and wherein the locking step comprises threading a handle portion through an opening in the cross-member and locking the handle portion to the cross-member.

21. The method of Claim 19, wherein the tank has a collar, and wherein the cup-shaped member is attached to a cross-member having two ends, the cross-member having means for engagement of the cross-member, at both of its ends, to the collar, and wherein the covering step comprises positioning the cross-member such that the cup covers the valve and such that the ends of the cross-member engage the collar, and wherein the locking step comprises locking one of the ends of the cross-member to the collar.

22. The method of Claim 19, wherein the tank has a collar, and wherein the locking step comprises threading a U-shaped member through holes in the cup, and locking the U-shaped member to the collar so as to prevent movement of the cup-shaped member.